The mill grinds from a kor – אַשְׁרֵה גוּרְיוֹן
Whenever grain is milled, a certain amount is lost. Some of this loss occurs when the millstones themselves, which must be rough enough to grind the grain, fill with pieces of the ground grain. This wastage can be reduced by the proper adjustment of the space between the millstones, but some very fine flour invariably blows away. Since part of this loss is a constant amount, if only a small quantity of grain is ground, the percentage of the loss is higher, i.e., the loss will be higher in proportion to the total amount of grain milled.

Dough is diminished from a kor – מִן כּוֹר
In the preparation of dough, some flour is always spilled or scattered, while a certain amount of dough will stick to the sides of the vessel. In this case too, the percentage of loss is greater when a small amount of flour is mixed.

PERSONALITIES

Nakdimon ben Guryon – נְקְדִיָּם בֶּן גּוּרְיוֹן
Nakdimon ben Guryon is described in several places in the sources as one of the wealthiest residents of Jerusalem at the time of the destruction of the Temple. He is possibly mentioned in the works of Josephus. As stated in the Gemara, his Hebrew name was apparently Buni, while he also had a Greek name, as was customary at the time. This Greek name was expounded on by the Sages as a way of memorializing this incident.

NOTES

Twelve wells – עַשְׁרֵה מַיָּה
Some commentators write that Nakdimon asked specifically for twelve wells of water, in the hope that the merits of the twelve tribes would help him to repay the loan. If their merits proved insufficient, perhaps the twelve talents of silver would atone for their transgressions (Maharsha).
Some commentaries explain that the sun did not set because the sun broke through for him. The sun stood for Moses together with Joshua, an indication that the sun did not set for Nakdimon, as in the incident of Joshua.

The sun stood for Moses. In addition to the allusions mentioned in the Gemara, the Sages elsewhere add that the phrase: “Upon the peoples that are under all the whole heaven” (Deuteronomy 25:3), indicates that this was not merely a local victory but an event that affected the entire world (see II Chronicles 32:31).

He said before God: Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before You that I did not act for my own honor, nor did I act for the honor of my father’s house. Rather, I acted for Your honor, so that there should be water for the Festival pilgrims. Immediately the sky became overcast and rain fell until the twelve cisterns were filled with water, and there was even more water, so that they overflowed.

As the master left the bathhouse, Nakdimon ben Guryon left the Temple. When they met one another, Nakdimon said to him: Give me the money you owe me for the extra water you received. The official said to him: I know that the Holy One, Blessed be He, has shaken His world and caused rain to fall only for you. However, I still maintain a claim against you, by which I can legally take my coins from you, as you did not pay me on the agreed date, for the sun had already set, and therefore the rain fell onto my property.

Nakdimon went back and entered the Temple, wrapped himself in his prayer shawl, and stood in prayer. He said before God: Master of the Universe, let it be known that You have beloved ones in Your world. Immediately, the clouds scattered and the sun shined. At that time, the master said to him: If the sun had not broken through the clouds, I would have had a claim against you, by which I could have taken my coins from you. A Sage taught: Nakdimon was not his real name; rather his name was Buni. And why was he called Nakdimon? Because the sun broke through [nikdera] for him.

The Sages taught: With regard to three people, the sun broke through and shone at an irregular time for their sake: Moses, Joshua, and Nakdimon ben Guryon. The Gemara asks: Granted, the case of Nakdimon ben Guryon is known by the aforementioned tradition. The case of Joshua too is derived from a verse, as it is written: “And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies” (Joshua 10:13). However, from where do we derive that the sun shined in a supernatural way for Moses?

Rabbi Elazar said: It is derived by verbal analogy between “I will begin” and “I will begin.” Here, with regard to Moses, it is written: “This day I will begin to put the dread of you and the fear of you upon the peoples that are under all the whole heaven” (Deuteronomy 2:25). And there, with regard to Joshua, it is written: “On this day I will begin to magnify you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you” (Joshua 3:7). The repeated use of the phrase “I will begin” indicates that all the miracles performed for Joshua were also performed for Moses.

Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani said: The fact that the sun stood still for Moses is derived by a different verbal analogy, between the terms “put” and “put.” Here, with regard to Moses, it is written: “I will begin to put the dread of you” (Deuteronomy 2:25). And there, with regard to Joshua, is it written: “Then Joshua spoke to the Lord, on the day when the Lord put the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: Sun, stand still upon Gibeon, and you, moon, in the valley of Ajalon” (Joshua 10:12).

Rabbi Yoḥanan said: This idea is derived from the verse itself, as it says with regard to Moses: “This day I will begin to put the dread of you and the fear of you upon the peoples that are under all the whole heaven, who, when they hear the report of you, shall tremble, and be in anguish due to you” (Deuteronomy 2:25). When did the nations of the world tremble and when were they in anguish due to you? When the sun broke through for Moses.
The mishna taught: And likewise, if there is a particular city upon which it did not rain, while the surrounding area did receive rain, this is considered a divine curse, as it is written: “And I will cause it to rain on one city, but on one city it will not cause it to rain, one portion will be rained upon, and the portion upon which it did not rain shall wither” (Amos 4:7). Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: And both of the cities are faced with a curse, as one city suffers from drought while the other is afflicted with destructive storms.

This statement reverses the plain meaning of a verse. The Gemara provides other interpretations that Rav Yehuda attributed to Rav, which also run contrary to the simple meaning of a verse. “Jerusalem among them was like a menstruating woman” (Lamentations 1:17). Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: Although the simple meaning of this verse is a curse, it can also be understood as a blessing. Jerusalem was like a menstruating woman. Just as a menstruating woman will become permitted to her husband after the conclusion of her days of ritual impurity, so too, Jerusalem will be repaired from its destruction.

Similarly, with regard to the verse: “How she has become like a widow” (Lamentations 1:11), Rav Yehuda said: This too is for a blessing. The verse states that Jerusalem is like a widow, but is not an actual widow. Rather, Jerusalem is like a woman whose husband has gone to a country overseas. Without her husband by her side she is likened to a widow, and yet he intends to return to her.

The same manner of explanation is provided for the verse: “Therefore I have also made you contemptible and base” (Malachi 2:9).

Rav Yehuda said: This too can be interpreted as a blessing, as meaning that the nations view us as lowly, but nevertheless, they do not assign us unpleasant jobs. They do not appoint from us either river officials or government officials (geziripatei).

The prophet Ahijah the Shilonite cursed Israel in the following terms: “For the Lord will smite Israel as a reed is shaken in the water” (1 Kings 14:15). Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: This too is for a blessing, as Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yohanan said: What is the meaning of that which is written: Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful (Proverbs 27:6)? The curse with which Ahijah the Shilonite cursed the Jewish people is more effective than the blessing with which Balaam the wicked blessed them.

Rabbi Yohanan elaborates: Ahijah the Shilonite cursed the Jewish people by comparing them to a reed: “For the Lord will smite Israel as a reed is shaken in the water.” Although it seems to be a curse, this verse is actually a blessing. Just as this reed stands in a place of water, and its shoots replenish themselves when cut, and its roots are numerous for a plant of its size, and even if all the winds in the world come and blow against it, they cannot move it from its place, rather, it sways with them until the winds subside, and the reed still stands in its place, the same applies to the Jewish people. After all the difficulties that they endure, they will ultimately survive and return home.

However, Balaam the wicked blessed the Jews by comparing them to a cedar, as it is stated: “As cedars beside the waters” (Numbers 24:6). Just as this cedar does not stand in a place of water, and its shoots do not replenish themselves, and its roots are not numerous, Balaam wished that the same should apply to the Jewish people. Furthermore, while it is true that even if all the winds in the world blow against it, they will not move it from its place, once the southern wind blows against it, it uproots the cedar and turns it on its face. And not only that, but the reed merited that a quill [kalnos] is taken from it to write with it a Torah scroll, the Prophets, and the Writings. Evidently, the curse comparing Israel to a reed is better than the blessing likening them to a cedar.
He happened upon an exceedingly ugly person, who said to him: Greetings to you, my rabbi, but Rabbi Elazar did not return his greeting. Instead, Rabbi Elazar said to him: Worthless [reikī]; person, how ugly is that man. Are all the people of your city as ugly as you? The man said to him: I do not know, but you should go and say to the Craftsman Who made me: How ugly is the vessel you made. When Rabbi Elazar realized that he had sinned and insulted this man merely on account of his appearance, he descended from his donkey and prostrated himself before him, and he said to the man: I have sinned against you; forgive me. The man said to him: I will not forgive you go until you go to the Craftsman Who made me and say: How ugly is the vessel you made.

He walked behind the man, trying to appease him, until they reached Rabbi Elazar’s city. The people of his city came out to greet him, saying to him: Greetings to you, my rabbi, my rabbi, my master, my master. The man said to them: Who are you calling my rabbi, my rabbi? They said to him: To this man, who is walking behind you. He said to them: If this man is a rabbi, may there not be many like him among the Jewish people. They asked him: For what reason do you say this? He said to them: He did such and such to me. They said to him: Even so, forgive him, as he is a great Torah scholar.

He said to them: For your sakes I forgive him, provided that he accepts upon himself not to become accustomed to behave like this. Immediately, Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, entered the study hall and taught: A person should always be soft like a reed and he should not be stiff like a cedar, as one who is proud like a cedar is likely to sin. And therefore, due to its gentle qualities, the reed merited that a quill is taken from it to write with it a Torah scroll, phylacteries, and mezuzot.

§ The mishna taught: And likewise, if a city is afflicted by pestilence or collapsing buildings,7 that city fasts and sounds the alarm, and all of its surrounding areas fast but they do not sound the alarm. Rabbi Akiva says: They sound the alarm but they do not fast. The Sages taught: These collapsing buildings to which the Sages referred are those of sturdy and not dilapidated walls; they have walls that are not ready to fall, and not those that are ready to fall.
The Gemara relates: This is like that dilapidated wall that was in Neharde’a, under which Rav and Shmuel would not pass, although it stood in place thirteen years. One day Rav Adda bar Ahava happened to come there and walked with them. As they passed by, Shmuel said to Rav: Come, Master, let us circumvent this wall, so that we do not stand beneath it. Rav said to him: It is not necessary to do so today, as Rav Adda bar Ahava is with us, whose merit is great, and therefore I am not afraid of its collapse.

The Gemara relates another incident. Rav Huna had a certain quantity of wine in a certain dilapidated house and he wanted to move it, but he was afraid that the building would collapse upon his entry. He brought Rav Adda bar Ahava to that, the ramshackle house, and he dragged out a discussion with him concerning a matter of halakha until they had removed all the wine. As soon as they exited, the building collapsed. Rav Adda bar Ahava realized what had happened and became angry.

The Gemara explains: Rav Adda bar Ahava holds in accordance with this statement, as Rabbi Yannai said: A person should never stand in a place of danger and say: A miracle will be performed for me, and I will escape unharmed, lest a miracle is not performed for him. And if you say that a miracle will be performed for him, they will deduct it from his merits. Rav Hanan said: What is the verse that alludes to this idea? As it is written: “I have become small from all the mercies and all the truth that You have showed Your servant” (Genesis 32:11). In other words, the more benevolence one receives from God, the more his merit is reduced.

After recounting stories that reflect Rav Adda bar Ahava’s great merit, the Gemara asks: What were the exceptional deeds of Rav Adda bar Ahava? The Gemara reports that they are as it is stated: The students of Rabbi Zeira asked him, and some say that the students of Rav Adda bar Ahava asked him: To what do you attribute your longevity? 3 They said to them: In all my days I did not become angry with my household, and I never walked before someone greater than myself; rather, I always gave him the honor of walking before me.

Rav Adda bar Ahava continued: And I did not think about matters of Torah in filthy alleyways, and I did not walk four cubits without engaging in Torah and without donning phylacteries; and I would not fall asleep in the study hall, neither a deep sleep nor a brief nap; and I would not rejoice in the mishap of my colleague; and I would not call my colleague by his nickname. And some say that he said: I would not call my colleague by his derogatory family name. 4

§ The Gemara relates another story about the righteous deeds of the Sages involving a dilapidated wall. Rava said to Rafram bar Pappa: Let the Master tell us some of those fine deeds that Rav Huna performed. He said to him: I do not remember what he did in his youth, but the deeds of his old age I remember. As on every cloudy day they would take him out in a golden carriage [guharka], and he would survey the entire city. And he would command that every unstable wall be torn down, lest it fall in the rain and hurt someone. If its owner was able to build another, Rav Huna would instruct him to rebuild it. And if he was unable to rebuild it, Rav Huna would build it himself with his own money.
Human food may not be fed to animals – מַאֲכַל אָדָם מַאֲכַל אָדוָם. It has been pointed out, based on numerous sources, that there is no prohibition against feeding animals food fit for human consumption (Rav Kavod). Some commentators explain that although one may indeed feed animals food fit for humans, it is prohibited to go out and buy this food with the intention of using it as animal fodder. Others suggest that one may feed animals with a small amount of food fit for humans, but not with large quantities of this food. Alternatively, there is a difference between food that is clearly intended for humans and food that is fit for humans but is also commonly given to animals, e.g., carrots and grains. Lastly, a distinction can be drawn between places where animal fodder is available and places where only food fit for human consumption is available (see Meir and Mezhef HaShekel).

The commentators ask: If it is not permitted to use food fit for human consumption as animal fodder, as this is disrespectful to the food, how could Rav Huna have thrown the vegetables into the river? Rashi explains that Rav Huna intended that the vegetables should drift downstream and be eaten by whoever found them. Others suggest that this was not a recognizable show of disrespect, as those who saw the vegetables in the river would assume that they were already rotten when discarded (Pe'er Einayim, citing Rosh).

HALAKHA

A remedy against Shivta – לִבְהֵמָה. Shivta is mentioned in several places in the Gemara as an evil spirit that rests on the hands of one who neglects to wash his hands at the appropriate times (Yoma 77b; Hullin 12b). In their responses, the gedolim explain that it is a disease that afflicts young children, causing them to waste away and die.

Map of central Babylonia

Human food may not be fed to animals – מַאֲכַל אָדָם מַאֲכַל אָדוָם. One may not feed food that is fit for human consumption to animals, as this is a disrespectful use of the food (Magen Avraham: Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 171). A remedy against Shivta – לִבְהֵמָה. Shivta is mentioned in several places in the Gemara as an evil spirit that rests on the hands of one who neglects to wash his hands at the appropriate times (Yoma 77b; Hullin 12b). In their responses, the gedolim explain that it is a disease that afflicts young children, causing them to waste away and die.

Background

Mehoza – מֶהוֹזָה. A city on the Tigris located near the Malka River, Mehoza was a large commercial city, and most of its inhabitants were Jews. Unlike most other Jewish communities, Mehoza's Jews generally earned their living from commerce. Jews from different countries of origin lived in Mehoza, and many converts lived there as well. After Neharde'a was destroyed in 259 CE, its yeshiva moved to Mehoza. Mehoza became the Torah center of leading scholars such as Rav Nahman; Rav Sheshet; Rava, who later became head of the yeshiva in Mehoza; Amelimar; and Rav Kahana, Rav Ashi's teacher. After Abaye's death, c. 338 CE, the yeshiva in Pumbedita, then headed by Rava, also moved to Mehoza for a period of time.

The Gemara objects: But if Rav Huna could not use them in any way, he should not purchase the vegetables at all. The Gemara answers: If nothing is done, you would have been found to have caused a stumbling block for them in the future. If the vegetable sellers see that some of their produce is left unsold, the next week they will not bring enough for Shabbat. Therefore, Rav Huna made sure that the vegetables were all bought, so that the sellers would continue to bring them.

Another custom of Rav Huna was that when he had a new medicine, he would fill a water jug with the medicine and hang it from the doorpost of his house, saying: All who need, let him come and take from this new medicine. And there are those say: He had a remedy against the demon Shivta that he knew by tradition, that one must wash his hands for protection against this evil spirit. And to this end, he would place a water jug and hang it by the door, saying: Anyone who needs, let him come to the house and wash his hands, so that he will not be in danger.

The Gemara further relates: When Rav Huna would eat bread, he would open the doors to his house, saying: Whoever needs, let him come in and eat. Rava said: I can fulfill all these customs of Rav Huna, except for this one, which I cannot do.

due to the fact that there are many soldiers in the city of Mehoza, and if I let them all eat, they will take all the food I own.